

The effectiveness of guidance and counseling in students choices of subjects in relation with their future vocation: a study at Twifo Praso catholic junior high school in Ghana.

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Abstract: *This paper seeks to explore the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in students' choices of subjects in relation with their future vocation in the Twifo Praso Catholic Junior High School in the Central Region of Ghana. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population for the study was 147 made up of the teachers and students. The sample for the study was 35. The sample of 35 was selected using the simple random and convenience sampling procedures. The open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from the teachers and students for the study. The data was analyzed thematically except for the demographic data of respondents that was analyzed using percentages and frequency counts. The findings of the study revealed that, the school counselor lacks the necessary resource to function, guidance and counseling activities do not function well as frequent as it should be. It further revealed that, most common problems students face in the school were academic, social and emotional. The study finally shows that, students get limited access to guidance and counseling services in the school. The study recommended that, school-based guidance and counseling coordinators should be well equipped with all necessary resources to function effectively. The study also recommended that, the school counselor provide alternative measures to make him available to students especially when they need him the most.*

Key Words: *Guidance and Counseling, Effectiveness, Students choice of subjects, Future vocation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Curriculum for schools has been changed over the years in diverse ways. The number of subjects studied has multiplied, thus making more demands on the students. Some of the students find it difficult to select the right subject combination because their interest, abilities and sometimes parental demands are at variance. Thus, parents also want their wards to pursue the course they want but not what their wards can do. In light of this, the Ghana Education Service (GES) recognized the urgent need for the orientation of pupils in the school. This is because the school is the new environment of the pupil since they all come from different socio-economic background, pupils therefore have diverse experiences. Based on the above factors, the Ghana Education Service introduced guidance and counseling in the schools. A circular Ref. No. GES/DG/015/117 was therefore sent to all primary and junior high schools in Ghana extending the guidance and counseling program to first cycle institutions as well. This is due to the fact that it helps students to make informed choices with regards to choosing the right courses and vocations as well. In the basic school, specifically both teachers and counselors are concerned with assisting the process of developing children through a purposeful value that are appropriate to self and society, insight into one's potential as a person, a realization of the interaction process within one's environment and self-discipline and the assumption of responsibility for one's actions (Boyd & Pins 1968). The appropriateness of these common goals is directly related to the extent to which teachers and counselors have the visionary qualities which enable them to look beyond the immediate task involved in daily routine of school life and grasp to the essence of the higher goals towards which these tasks are aimed. In accordance with the above this study seeks to find out the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in students' choice of subjects in relation with their future vocation

The industrial revolution, the advent of information technology, changes in the world economy and job market as well as the challenges of unemployment, have made the relevance of guidance and counselling a complex phenomenon among pupils. In recent times, the guidance and counselling programme seem to have not made any significant impact in the academic, social and moral life of pupils (Collins, 2007). Statistics available indicates that, 15% of schools in Twifo Atti Morkwa District have guidance and counselling services and coordinators available in the districts (GES, Twifo Atti Morkwa District). In some schools, the guidance and counseling programme has gained ground and is helping pupils to adjust, discover their potentials: who they are, what they are and what they are capable of doing as well as choosing the right type of subject related to their future vocation.

In some schools however, the programme is not functioning as effectively as it should. Hence, pupils are unable to make right subject choices and/or combinations. In spite of the implementation of guidance and counseling services in some schools in the district, its relevance is not felt as expected by major stakeholders. This may be due to the unavailability of qualified and efficient counselors to effectively implement the guidance and counseling services among junior high school pupils in the Twifo Atti Morkwa District. As a result of the aforementioned gap in the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services among schools in the district, there is the need to assess the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in pupils' choice of subjects. The study therefore seeks to assess the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in students' choices of subjects in relation with their future vocation.

1.1. Research Questions:

- How effective is guidance and counseling at the basic school?
- How do students get their personal, academic and social problems solved?
- What are the common problems among students?
- Do student's choices of subjects match their choice of future vocations?

1.2. Significance of the Study:

The study will encourage counselors, teachers and head teachers to work efficiently to improve guidance and counseling program in schools. It is hoped that the finding of the study would help basic school teachers to identify their roles in providing guidance service.

2. METHODOLOGY:

There are numerous research designs in solving research problems. The descriptive survey design was used for this study. According to Jackson (2009), the descriptive survey design is used when the researcher wants to get responses from individuals on topics and describe their responses. This method was used to collect data to answer questions relating to how guidance and counseling program is utilized to solve some basic issues like academic, social and vocational problems in the basic schools. .

2.1. Population:

The population for the study includes pupils and teachers of the Twifo Praso Catholic Junior High School. The total population for the school is one hundred and forty-seven (147) comprising one hundred and forty (140) pupils and seven (7) teachers.

2.2. Sample and Sampling Procedure:

The sample size for the study is 35 made up of 30 pupils and five (5) teachers. The sample included Junior High School (JHS) 1, 2 and 3 pupils and teachers. The simple random technique was used to sample 30 pupils for the study while 5 teachers were also sampled through the convenient sampling technique. The convenient sampling technique was appropriate for sampling the teachers because not all teachers were available at the time of the study. For this reason, teachers who were available at the time of the data collection were sampled. On the other hand, the simple random sampling was used to sample the 30 pupils because it gave every member of the population an equal chance of being selected for the study.

2.3. Research Instruments:

The instruments used for the data collection was the open-ended questionnaire for both teachers and students. The students' open-ended questionnaires were made up of eleven (11) items while the teachers' open-ended questionnaire included nine items (9). The questionnaire was considered for the study because both students and teachers could read and understand the items and respond to them appropriately. Moreover, since the students are the direct key players in the subject selection and career decision making process, it was necessary to get indebt information from them hence the open-ended questionnaire to solicit additional information that a closed-ended questionnaire might not be able to achieve. The open-ended questionnaire was flexible to a greater extent; offer respondents' the opportunity to express their views, feelings and experiences freely (Kusi, 2012). On the other hand, the open-ended questionnaire, most research respondents will feel more comfortable since it requires them to express their views and feelings freely without a restricted option of choice. Based on the above, the open-ended questionnaire is considered appropriate to solicit the opinions of teachers and students on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling in students' choice of subject and future vocation.

2.4. Data Collection:

Prior to the data collection, the researcher visited the selected school and sought permission from school authorities and also explained to them the purpose of the study. The researcher thereafter collected the data by issuing the research questionnaire to the teachers with an ample time given to them to complete the responses of the items. Another schedule was made for the pupils'. Both the teachers' and students' questionnaire were administered when the respondents were deemed comfortable enough to provide reliable information.

2.5. Data Analysis:

The open-ended questionnaire was analyzed through the thematic approach except for the demographic data of respondents that was analyzed using frequency and percentage counts. The thematic analysis was done through identified themes in the responses from both questionnaires.

2.6. Ethical Considerations:

An issue with confidentiality and privacy of personal rights of the respondents was assured. Permission was obtained from school authorities. The purpose of the study was also explained verbally to respondents and was assured that their participation was voluntary and the information given was only for research purpose. The respondents were informed not to write their names on the instrument for identity protection.

3. ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

The results of the study were analyzed qualitatively through the thematic approach except for the demographic data of respondents which was analyzed using frequency and percentage counts. It also provides interpretation and discussion of the major findings of the study. The data analysis was done research question by question including the demographic data of the respondents. From the analysis, the following themes came out strongly:

- **Effectiveness of the guidance and counseling service at the basic school**
- **Measures that enable students' problems or needs to be solve by the school counselor**
- **Frequent problems students encounter in the school**
- **The match between students' subject choice and their future vocation**

3.1. Demographic Data of Respondents:

Items 1 and 2 on the respondents' questionnaire were used to solicit relevant information for the demographic background of the respondents.

3.2. Gender of Respondents:

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Responses	
	Frequency	Percentage
Male	25	72
Female	10	28
Total	35	100

Source; Field data, June (2019)

The demographic data of respondents as shown in Table 1 indicates that, 25 (72%) of the respondents were males while 10 (28%) were females. This shows that majority of the sampled respondents who took part in the study were males. However, among the five (5) teachers who took part in the study, three (3) of them were females while two (2) were males respectively.

3.3. Age of Respondents:

Out of the sample of 30 students, who took part in the study, 10 (33%) were below 12 years, 5 (17%) were within the age range of 12 and 15 while 9 (30%) of them were in the age range of 16-19 years. 6 (20%) however, were more than 18 years old. The result indicates that, majority of the students were below 12 years. Moreover, all the teachers who took part in the study were more than 30 years old.

3.4. Class/Form of Students

Data gathered from the students' questionnaire indicates that, as at the time of the data collection, 15 (50%) of the respondents were in form 1, 10 (33.3%) were in form 3 while 5 (16.7%) were in form 2. The result indicates that, majority of the respondents were in form 1.

3.5. Number of Years of Service in the School:

Among the five (5) teachers sampled for the study, 1 (20%) teacher has been teaching in the school for the past 10 years, 2 (40%) of them thought for 3 years while 1 (20%) have thought for the past 15 years as a form teacher. Only 1 (20%) teacher however, has been in the school for just a term. The result indicates that, only a teacher has taught for the highest number of years in the school.

3.6. Effectiveness of guidance and counseling service at the basic school:

The data under this issue involves various implementation and effectiveness of the guidance and counseling services at the Twifo Praso Catholic Junior High School. These were derived from direct questions posed to both teachers and students on the effectiveness of the guidance and counseling services as implemented by the school counselors to curb the problems of students down. And also, teachers' views on the effectiveness of the school counselor and available counseling services in the school. The effectiveness of guidance and counseling services was based on how often guidance and counseling programs were offered in the school, and whether or not if respondents were satisfied with the services. The data gathered from the respondents' questionnaire indicates that, 29 (82.8%) of the respondents were of the view that they were satisfied with the provision of guidance and counseling services in the school. The result could be interpreted to mean that, almost all of the respondents' including the teachers enjoyed some form of guidance and counseling services from the programs organized by the school counselors this is evidence in the result of the respondents which shown that, 82.8% of the teachers and students responded positively to the statements.

Out of the total number of students who responded to the statements, five of them indicated that;

“their school has a guidance and counseling coordinator from the district education office who runs from school to school giving assistance to students” The students further indicated that, the guidance and counseling coordinator visits more than twice every week to check if any student has an issue to be discussed.

Thus, in the absence of the designated school counselors, there is always an available counseling coordinator from the district education office who sees to the smooth running of guidance and counseling services in the school. On the other hand, another respondent stated that,

“The counseling services go on well. However, the counselor has no office from which he operates so he finds it difficult to meet us frequently”. He further stated that, though the counselor has no office, he uses one of the classrooms as his office especially when a student needs his help urgently.

The notion from the student indicates that, though counseling services exist in the school, it is not effective since the school counselor has no office from which he operates. In the light of the situation, two of the teachers who were contacted indicated that,

Though the school guidance and counseling services are frequently and effectively offered in the school by the school counselor and the district guidance and counseling coordinator, it is not yielding the needed significance.

This is to say that, the impact and effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in the school such as information service and guidance service along with referral services do not meet the needs of the students in the school. This could have been very effective if the school counselor has an office (counseling center) from which he operates in order to reach out to students who may face academic, social, emotional or psychological problems among others. According to Shertzer and Stone (1980), when teachers and school counselors are essentially interested in their students' needs and are well equipped with the necessary facilities needed for effective guidance and counseling services, they will be able to help their students find answers to common questions and they would know where they can get assistance in helping students locate other needed information”. According to the others, the more school counselors are equipped with resources the more their services will be effective. Though there is a school counselor and a district guidance and counseling coordinator responsible for school guidance and counseling services, they lack the necessary resource to function.

Among students and teachers who were questioned on the frequency of guidance and counseling services in the school, 10 students were of the view that the services function on the following bases;

Our school counselor once every month takes us through the guidance and counseling programs to help us to choose best vocations especially to students in form 2.

Another student indicated that,

The school counselor and the district counselor only visit students once every month to find out how students and teachers fear in the school coupled with academic and emotional wellbeing of students.

However, the teachers explained that,

The guidance and counseling programme and services are offered to students almost every month on the bases of when and how students need help for guidance and counseling.

The teachers further stated that the counseling services and programs are not often felt in the school the main counselor is based in the district education office and only visits the school periodically.

The result indicates that, irrespective of the availability of the school and district counselor and guidance and counseling coordinator respectively, the activities of guidance and counseling in the school do not occur as frequent as it should be hence, the decline in the provision of counseling services in the school. The findings agree with the study of Essuman (1999) which states that, as school counselor become ineffective in the provision of guidance and counseling services on regular bases, its impact and expectation may not be fully implemented.

However, as indicated by Alfred and Daniel (2003), guidance and counseling programs become effective when they are offered on daily or regular bases to diagnose and evaluate students' needs.

3.7. Measures that enable students' problems or needs to be solved by the school counselor:

In addition, respondents were asked for their satisfaction on the provision of guidance and counseling services. Among the respondents who responded to the items, more than half of the students disagreed that there are satisfied with the provision of guidance and counseling services in the school. About 75% of the students indicated that, they do not get the opportunity to visit the school counselor. Some of the students indicated that;

The counselor is not always available in the school when we need him. The district counseling coordinator also comes to our school during classes' period so we don't get the chance to go closer to him. "Sometimes, it looks as if he is in a rush to go back to another school since he tries to visit many schools in a day".

Moreover, two students' response indicated that,

Though they get some amount of guidance services from the school counselor, it does not meet their needs as expected.

On the same issues, the teachers affirmed the unavailability of opportunities for students to get in contact with the school counselor. They again indicated that;

Though students get the opportunity of visiting the school counselor or district coordinator, the services are not satisfying since there is no counseling center and the counselors are not stable for the purpose of counseling in the school.

The result indicates that, most of the students and teachers disagreed that the guidance and counseling coordinator together with the school counselors' do not create an enabling counseling environment for students and teachers to reach them for assistance. Irrespective of the aforementioned necessities, students have less chances of getting help from the school counselor. Bismark (1997) supports the study in the sense that, guidance is a process not an end result so therefore, its availability to students should be readily available and felt since guidance is conceptualized as process therefore continuous, not given at an instance and then stopped. Students need the availability of the school counselor to help solve their academic and emotional needs among others.

A teacher indicated that,

For the unavailability of a school counseling office (center), students' needs are not properly taken care of. It is very urgent to provide and have a well-furnished office for the school counselor to function especially in the cases where student(s) need(s) one-on-one counseling.

Additionally, both teachers and students who responded to the various helps available to students by the school counselor indicated that;

The school counselor offers academic, social, personal and emotional assistance to both students and teachers in the school.

This is evidenced in the responses of the teachers whose result indicated that;

though the school counselor is not well equipped with the resources needed for the implementation of guidance and counseling services, the school counselor with the help of the district coordinator, use the little available resources to meet students' needs except on few occasions that they refer students to some other counselors in the community who have much resources to take care of student's needs. But a student mentioned that;

Their school counselor pays less attention to their academic needs. "Sometimes, when you go to him about your studies, he will only tell you that he has no office to take you through your academic problem so visit another counseling's in the community social welfare office".

This means that, out of the total of 30 students who responded to the items, more than 60% of them disagreed to the assertion that the school counselor helps them in their academic, social and emotional needs among others. The result further indicates that, though some amount of guidance services is rendered in the school, it appears that the availability and provision of guidance and counseling services in the school do not meet the needs of the students.

However, data gathered from the teachers' questionnaire have been identifying as similar to that of the students. Based on the teachers' responses, the following emerged;

Students in the school get academic, social, emotional and psychological help from the school counselor though the school counselor is not always present in the school. They further stated that, out of personal and the little available resources from the school, the counselor helps students in both academic and social issues except for few cases that students were referred to some other counselors in the community.

The findings of this study are in line with the study of Arbuckle (1970), who stated that the broad objective of guidance and counseling in schools is to help the individual to clear away that entangling and hampering tentacles so that he can be what he really is and contribute more both to himself and his fellows. The study again agrees with the finding of Shertzer and Stone (1976), who revealed that guidance and counseling services are offered in the school to take care of the totality of students' educational experiences since they are formalized actions undertaken by the school counselor to make guidance operational and available to students.

3.7. Frequent problems students encounter in the school:

One objective of this research was to explore some common problems students face in the school which though the school counselor does not have an office from which he operates, it is expected that such students' problems need to be solved by the school counselor and the district guidance and counseling coordinator. Among the response from the respondents, some of them indicated that;

They are mostly harassed by their seniors while others revealed that they are mostly bullied by their senior, class mates and teachers in the school.

Common result from both and students' responses indicates the following as problems students face in the school;

Harassment from seniors, bullying from teachers, excessive corporal punishment, insufficient attention from teachers, truancy, poor study habit among others.

From the result, it can be seen that, students' problems that need guidance and counseling intervention are numerous in the school. The result shows that, bullying and harassment are prevalent in the school. This is due to the unavailability of the school counselor to arrest students' problems before they escalate into uncontrolled problems as students face in the school.

3.8. The match between students' subject choice and their future vocation:

Student's choice of subject is considered significant when the choice matches the students' desire for a future vocation or career. According to Shertzer & Stone (1976), students' inability to make appropriate career choices is the prevailing factor to unemployment among undergraduate students. He stressed that, a well-balanced career decision is manifested in the choice of subject. The analysis shows that:

Though their school counselor helps them in some cases that they need help, he does not assist them in their choice of subjects to match their future vocation (16-year-old student).

Specifically, a mismatch in subject selection and future vocation reduces students' chances of making more positive future vocational choices. Contributing to the debate, a 17-year-old student indicated that;

When they were in form 2 to select their schools and programs prior to the basic school certificate examination, they had only their parents and friends assisting them for the selection. However, their school counselor did just a little through a day seminar on how to choose the schools stressing on the categories of the schools.

The teachers on the other hand also affirmed the response from the students to say that,

Our students have little assistance when it comes to the issue of school and subject selection.

This means that for the full implementation and provision of guidance and counseling services in the school, the school counselor must be equipped with the necessary resources needed to function effectively. Alfred and Daniel (2003) agrees with the findings of the study in the sense that, as students are less of privileged to make informed subject combination, their career one way or the other will be affected. They further stated that, school counselors must at all-time blend students, achievements and abilities together with their desires for a particular study area and vocation for them to make appropriate career decisions.

4. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION: .

Summary of Findings

The following findings emerged from the study;

- The findings of the study revealed that though there is a school counselor and a district guidance and counseling coordinator responsible for school guidance and counseling services, they lack the necessary resource to function.

- The findings also revealed that guidance and counseling activities do not function well as frequent as it should be hence, the decline in the provision of counseling services in the school.
- The findings of the study further revealed that, the most common problems students face in the school were academic, social and emotional problems.
- In addition, the findings of the study revealed that students get limited access to guidance and counseling services in the school.
- Finally, the findings of the study indicated that the school counselor lacks the necessary logistics to organize guidance talks to assist students in their choice of subjects and future vocations.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the major findings, the following recommendations were enumerated:

- The study recommended that school-based guidance and counseling coordinators should be given career development training to acquire the needed skills to assist students make the subject's choice that would match their future vocations.
- It also recommended that the district guidance and counseling coordinator and the school-based counselor join hands together to implement guidance services aimed at assisting students and teachers in the school.
- The study again recommended that, appropriate measures be put in place by the school counselor and the school authorities to curb the common and prevalent problems students face in the school.
- It was also recommended that the school counselor provide alternative measures to make him available to students especially when they need him the most.
- Finally, it was recommended that the school counselor should be provided with the logistics and equipment necessary for the provision of guidance and counseling services in the school.

6. CONCLUSION:

It was concluded based on the findings and recommendations of the study that, in as much as the relevance of guidance and counseling is concern, the Ghana education service, ministry of education, the guidance and counseling coordinators should see to the full implementation of guidance and counseling centers in every school to help address students challenges and needs appropriately. As the student population of our schools increases, so should guidance and counseling coordinators be posted to the various schools and provide them with the necessary logistics for effective service delivery.

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